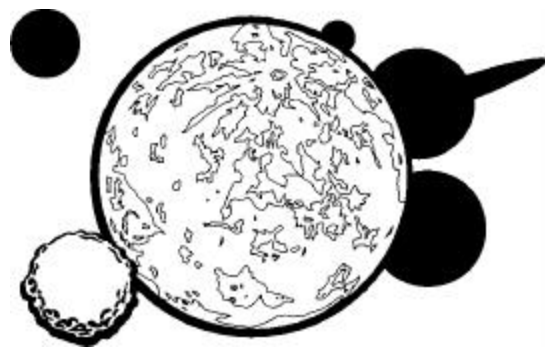


Surfing the *solar* system



Pay a quick visit to these Internet sites* and you'll find yourself transported - to the moon, the planets, and stars.

ExploreZone.com is a great place to keep up with the latest solar system news and entertainment. Packed with colorful pictures and animations - like a recent solar flare snapshot - and lively headlines. *Examples:* "Freeze, fry, or dry: How long has the Earth got?" and "Kamikaze Comets." <http://explorezone.com/news/sun.htm>

National Geographic's Virtual Solar System is "your chance to discover the wonders of our solar system in a spectacular 3D environment." Begin with a view from 4,560 million miles out, then click away to tour the sun, planets, or asteroids of your choice. Pause to watch the whirls and swirls. www.nationalgeographic.com/solarsystem/splash.html

Create Your Own Planet lets you play an online demo of an educational game based on the movie *Lost in Space*. You make a planet for the Robinson family to land on, place it in orbit around a sun in the galaxy of your choice, then design its structure, atmosphere, and more. The Robinsons send you an e-mail to let you know how they survive. www.createyourownplanet.com

Astronomy Picture of the Day - what astronomy buff, young or old, could resist this up-to-the-minute site? A different image or photo of "our fascinating universe" is featured daily, including a brief explanation from a professional astronomer and informative links. Click on "Discover the Cosmos!" for reams of archives. <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod>

Quarks to Quasars is a fun tour that can take you outward toward the immensity of the known universe. Or go inward, to the 3 quarks within a proton within a carbon atom beneath the skin of a man sleeping on a grass-covered Chicago field. Each successive image shows a view 10 times wider or narrower than the previous one. Based on the book *The Powers of Ten*. www.wordwizz.com/pwrsof10.htm

Spacekids.com has definite kid appeal, with an educational focus that can jibe with teachers' lesson plans. Point your child toward this glossy online magazine of news, information, games, photos, and movies about space and astronomy. (Or pay your own visit to the parent site, www.space.com.) www.spacekids.com

A Chronology of Mars Exploration details the trials, tribulations, and successes of unmanned missions to Mars. Did you know? Since October 1960, at least 18 Mars probes, 14 of them Russian, have failed to reach that planet. A revealing up-to-the-minute report. www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/marschro.htm

The Nine Planets offers a multimedia tour of the solar system, including history, mythology, and current scientific knowledge. Each page has text and images, sometimes sounds or movies. A pet project of astronomy fan and software engineer Bill Arnett. www.seds.org/nineplanets/nineplanets

Maps of the Solar System, also from NASA, lets you scrutinize details (warts and all) of your favorite planets. Download maps or browse the surface features. <http://maps.jpl.nasa.gov>

*Addresses subject to change without notice

